How to Develop a Latino Consumer Group: Lessons Learned from Santa Barbara County

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Partners in Hope

- CSS approved Program (1 of 10)
  - SB is a Medium Sized County
    400,000 residents
  - Provides services to consumers
    countywide
  - Peer to peer services
  - Services to family members
  - One of three FTE’s is required to
    be bilingual
Sustainability of Latino Groups

- Support group for Latinos initiated by MHSA Project Staff
- MHSA Staff assigned to support existing group in Santa Barbara
- Group meets twice a month
- Weekly calls to check in and remind all participants of meeting
- Food is provided
- Childcare is provided
- Everyone is welcomed
Latino Engagement

- Participation as a consumer
- Provided outreach services as a volunteer
- Transitioned to employment within the county as a Partners in Hope peer recovery specialist
- Established additional Latino Support groups and activities as a peer recovery specialist
Lessons Learned

- Our priorities may not be communities priorities
  - Priorities of the community may be different than ours......
- The needs are basic – it’s about inclusion
  - Transformation Means Inclusion
  - Isolation is common – support networks are important
- This is a partnership
  - Partnership with MHSA team
  - Independence is defined differently
  - Cultural similarities with staff are strong bonds
- Groups have a collectivist mentality
  - Meetings are all inclusive (family, children, extended kin)
    - How does this fit with traditional approach
    - There is safety in numbers
    - Cultural bonds are strong and serve to bring the group together
    - Child care is also a need
Lessons Learned Continued

• Isolation
  - Language, economics, residential status, MH stigma,
  - Lack of extended kinship family
  - Reduction of Services
    • Great need for peer run support services
  - Lack of resource materials - needs for ethnic communities are often an afterthought
    • Simple translations may not work due to cultural complexity and realities

• Participants look to staff for leadership
  - Peer run groups are a goal not a beginning
  - Leadership must be developed - fear, self doubt must be addressed

• Members are inclusive
  - Concepts of family are infused into group

• MHSA Plans
  - Strengthen all consumer efforts for peer run activities
Engagement Efforts

- Meetings must begin differently. . . . .
  - Process of Conocimiento must take place.
    - Introduction, where are you from, how long have you been here, tell us about your family.
  - Provide a “platica” environment – create a sense of comfort – personalismo and confianza
  - Pleasantries go a long way - Buenas Noches etc.
  - Be aware of the importance of “dignidad”
    - Internalized stigma related to MH will have to be dealt with in the group
- Individualized efforts – personal outreach
  - Required a considerable amount of staff time
- Engage staff that serve Latino clients
- Hang out at the clinics
- Seek out other providers that serve Latino clients/families
Engagement Efforts

- Client/family to client/family invitations
- Hold meetings in community settings
- At first, it is important to stay consistent - Don’t change location of meetings and times
- Recognize that Latino is inclusive of multiple nationalities
- Recognize that communities have long term memories
  - How many initiatives have engaged ethnic communities to address issues only to stop due to funding....
- Recognize that communities fear county systems
  - To many communities we are one system